

LATTON PRIORY DRAFT STRATEGIC DESIGN CODE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

DECEMBER 2023

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V2	06.03.24	KS updates

About this report

This report contains the findings of the statutory consultation and community engagement for the Latton Priory Draft Strategic Design Code, carried out from October – December 2023. It has been prepared by Jessica Cargill-Thompson, community engagement consultant, on behalf of Epping Forest District Council (EFDC), a Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT) partner. Although the survey was kept open past the initial finish date of 11 December 2023 at the request of Robert Halfon MP, results included here are to 17 Dec for the purposes of reporting and taking comments on board in a refined version of the design code ; submissions after this date will be addressed in any further refinements.



Executive summary

A Strategic Design Code is being prepared by Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) as part of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT) partnership, using Pathfinder funding from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Community (DLUHC).

An eight-week period of statutory public consultation was carried out on the draft document from 20 October to 11 December 2023.

Members of the public were invited to attend in person discussions, workshops and exhibitions about the code, arranged in both Harlow and Thornwood, close to the site.

Notes were taken at these sessions and people were invited to submit responses to the draft code via an online survey (engage.hggt.co.uk), email, or Freepost. Two bespoke workshops were also held with the Harlow and Epping Forest Youth Councils. The outcomes of this community engagement is contained in this report.

Publicity for the consultation and events used social media to target postcodes closest to the site, in both Harlow and Epping. Printed posters were also displayed in public venues and email newsletters sent.

EFDC officers also contacted statutory consultees, the HGGT Developers Forum, and Harlow and Epping Forest members for feedback; these are reported separately.

Overall there was general consensus from the local community on the core design ambitions and requirements set out in the Draft Strategic Design Code, with some themes emerging as priorities.

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The key themes that emerged were:

- Integration with surrounding area, including borders, connections and existing infrastructures. This ranges from area-wide considerations such as public transport networks, to treatment of borders and the continuation of landscaping from the new development into existing streets
- Ensuring high quality of design and construction of the new buildings
- Impact on views from existing homes on the edge of Harlow, which currently look out over fields, and the enjoyment of people who currently go for walks there. It was suggested by respondents that putting lower buildings on the Harlow boundary, or a green buffer might mitigate this.
- Concerns over the location of the travellers' site allocation, which was thought to be too central
- Maintenance of green and public spaces was a priority, with questions asked about who would be responsible for funding and managing this.
- Strong support for measures to address climate change, including using green streets
- Nature and green space – especially fields, hedgerows and woodland - is part of the local identity. Minimising impact on existing natural habitats while including greenery and green spaces in new streets and public spaces were therefore strongly supported.
- Safety and security in public spaces. Good lighting and surveillance are considered paramount on streets, cycle routes, car barns and other public spaces. However, people still favour cctv over natural surveillance provided by overlooking.
- Variety of built forms is important, with many people disliking what they see as characterless 'slabs'

It was also suggested that the Latton Priory Strategic Design Code could be used to guide other local developments.

However, strong concerns were raised about the impact of development beyond the scope of the Design Code. These were:

- The impact of increased traffic on local roads, in particular Rye Hill Road and the B1393. Respondents said roads were already congested and that more households moving into the area would exacerbate the problem.
- Pressures on social infrastructure, particularly healthcare and schools, and the provision of these facilities at the same time as homes, rather than later.
- Pressures on water – reservoirs and sewage – as well as increased risk of flooding
- Local disruption during construction.

Several visitors to the in-person events and respondents to the survey used the opportunity to protest against development on the site. These objections came largely from Harlow residents whose homes abut the Latton Priory site.

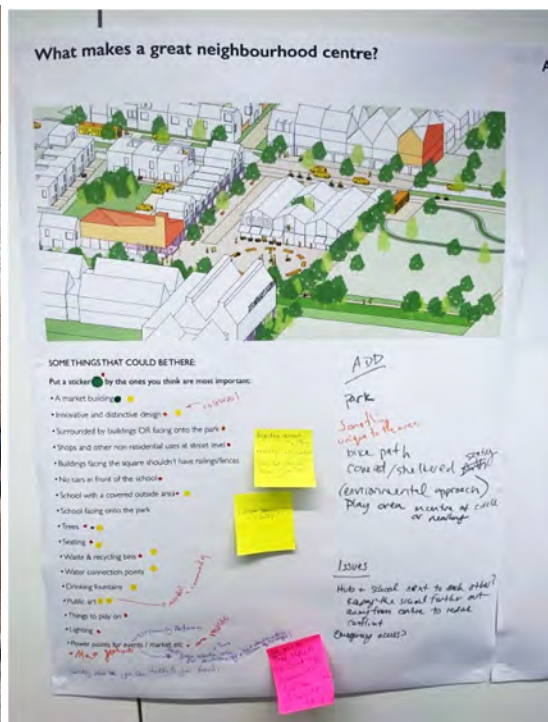
Officers have also collected feedback from statutory consultees and tested the practical application of the document with independent architects.

All responses are being considered by officers and refinements made to the draft Strategic Design Code where appropriate.



Drop-in exhibition at Thornwood Village Hall

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Workshops with Harlow and Epping Forest Youth Councils

Introduction

In 2022 Epping Forest District Council won Pathfinder funding from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to develop a Strategic Design Code for a site at Latton Priory, part of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town plan, to the south of Harlow, but also within the boundary of Epping Forest District.

The purpose of the Autumn 2023 engagement strategy was to carry out statutory consultation on the Draft Strategic Design Code for Latton Priory.

Development of the draft document has been informed by engagement previously carried out by both EFDC in Spring 2023, and the land agents, CEG and Hallam Land in 2019 and 2023 during preparation of a Strategic Masterplan Framework for the site (endorsed by EFDC in July 2023). It also learns from what was heard during engagement on modifications to the EFDC Local Plan (July-September 2021), and other specialist reports such as transport.

What we wanted to know at this stage

- Is it a practical tool that will be straightforward to use?
- Are there any issues arising from what's proposed so far?
- Any 'musts' that need to be 'shoulds'?

What respondents could / couldn't influence at this stage

- The Strategic Masterplan Framework elements are fixed
- The Strategic Design Code has to comply with other district and national policies

Feedback on all aspects of the design code was welcomed.

This was also a chance to raise local awareness of the development and wider HGGT.

It was important to reach residents of all ages and representing all communities.

Statutory consultees were also contacted by officers; these responses have been reported separately.

Engagement strategy

A seven-week consultation period was agreed from Friday 20 October to Monday 11 December, targeting communities in both Harlow and Epping, but open to anyone.

The main methods for collecting feedback were:

- In person public exhibitions/workshops
- A website and online survey

Workshops/exhibitions

To allow a forum in which people could understand and discuss what is a fairly technical planning document, local in-person exhibitions / discussions were considered the best format.

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Four general public sessions were held: two at the Latton Bush Centre in Harlow, and two at Thornwood Village Hall, Epping. Sessions were open to all, with one weekend session and one evening in each location to cater to as many people’s lifestyles as possible.

These were advertised by the EFDC and HGGT comms team using social media (see below) as well as posters in Epping Library, Civic Offices, and Latton Bush Centre. Members were also informed and invited to share with their networks.

Sessions were typically two hours long and included clear exhibition boards (see appendix), printed copies of the draft code and a short presentation that distilled the key points of the design code into clear, accessible highlights. EFDC officers were on hand to discuss issues and provide clarifications.

Notes were taken at all sessions and logged as qualitative data. Participants were also encouraged to visit the online survey to leave more structured comments relating directly to the design code. Paper versions of the survey were also available, returnable by Freepost.

Youth workshops

To ensure the voices of young people were well represented in the consultation, bespoke interactive workshops were held with both Epping Forest and Harlow youth councils.

These drilled down into topics that had been identified during engagement with young people in early 2023 as being particularly important to this group: public space, nature, and movement.

Older residents

A bespoke session was also arranged with residents of Leonard Davis House retirement housing, North Weald. However this was cancelled by the home due to double booking. As residents were also invited to nearby public sessions, and had a busy schedule, a replacement session was not scheduled.

Website

A project website was set up using CitizenLab and hosted on the HGGT engage.hggt.co.uk website. This hosted:

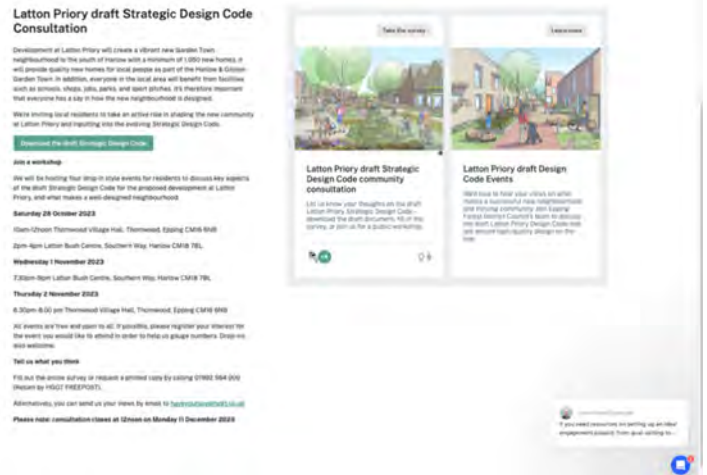
- Easily digestible information about the draft Strategic Design Code
- Details of public events
- A public survey
- Answers and clarifications to Frequently Asked Questions

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Survey

The survey was flagged on the HGGT website and advertised through social media and QR codes on posters for the most locally targeted reach.

The survey was structured to map onto the chapters of the design code and test agreement. The relevant chapter was linked to in each section, and the full design code available to download from the website.



Screenshot of Latton Priory CitizenLab website

To keep the survey completion time below 10 minutes, sliding scale questions were used ('On a scale of 1-5, how important is...') to test specific aspects of the code. So potential respondents were not deterred or overwhelmed by the length of the survey, participants could answer as many or few questions as they wanted to. There was also the option for all sections to provide other comments.

A project email address was also widely advertised for anyone who wished to provide their response as a freestyle written submission instead.

The full survey questions are available in the appendix.

Mitigating digital exclusion

In order to mitigate digital exclusion, paper copies of both the survey and the draft Design Code were available at EFDC offices and the Discover Harlow engagement hub, which opened part-way through the consultation period.

Testing practical application

Independent architects were commissioned to test how usable the code would be in practice. This has been reported separately.

Statutory consultees

All statutory consultees were emailed with a copy of the Statutory Design Code and invited to submit feedback by 11 December 2023. The following responded:

- Canal and River Trust
- Historic England
- National highways
- North Weald Basset Parish Council
- Persimmon Homes
- Place Services
- Sport England

These are reported separately.

Land agent’s concurrent consultation

It is worth noting that this consultation overlapped with a separate consultation carried about by CEG and Hallam Land from 10 November-8 December via their website lattonpriory.co.uk. As CEG and Hallam Land were reluctant to delay their consultation until after the design code consultation, measures were taken to clearly message the difference between the two consultations and mitigate any public confusion.

Communications

Publicity of the events and the consultation survey was carried out by HGGT and EFDC communications teams.

The main method was through existing newsletters and social media that could target Harlow and Epping residents by postcode.

In total, more than 700 people visited the CitizenLab consultation website, showing effective reach across the area. Only a small percentage chose to leave comments / objections on the survey, it can be assumed that there was general consensus for the code.

Social media data is as follows:

Facebook

- Impressions – 42,162
- People reached – 9517
- Most Engaged Audience – **1.** 35-44 year olds; **2.** 45-54; **3.** 55-64 **4.** 25-34
- Click throughs to CitizenLab – 563
- Click through rate percentage – 1.34% (above Facebook average of circa 0.9%)
- Cost per click – 37p

Instagram

- Reach – 4082
- Click throughs to CitizenLab – 145

In addition, posters were displayed in civic venues in Epping and at the Discover Harlow engagement hub in the Harvey Centre.

Members were also contacted and asked to publicise to their constituents and networks.

Context

Where is the Latton Priory site?

Latton Priory sits to the south of Harlow, and lies within the administrative area of Epping Forest District. It is 1.7 miles from Harlow Civic Centre (10 minute cycle) and approximately 3.5 miles (20 mins cycle) from Epping town centre. It is bordered by Rye Hill Road to the west.

Who owns the land and who will develop it?

The land is privately owned and the promoters of the site are CEG and Hallam Land Management. Epping Forest District Council and Harlow and Gilston Garden Town are working with the site promoters to help develop high-quality proposals that achieve the aims and vision of the District and the Garden Town.



Map showing Latton Priory site outlined in red

What is the purpose of the Latton Priory Strategic Design Code?

The Latton Priory Strategic Design Code sets out design standards and requirements to be met by developers in future planning applications. These standards seek to ensure that the development is high-quality, sustainable and well-integrated.

The design code is part of the planning process for the Latton Priory Masterplan Area. It follows the endorsement by EFDC of the Strategic Masterplan Framework (SMF) for the site. The SMF includes mandatory spatial principles for the site and these form the basis of the layout shown in the design code.

Once endorsed, the design code will be a material consideration in future planning decisions, along with the SMF. Neither of these documents are planning applications and neither of them give permission to build.

When planning applications are submitted in the future, for the Latton Priory masterplan area, they will need to take account of the mandatory spatial principles in the SMF and the standards set out in the design code.

What is in the Latton Priory Strategic Design Code?

The design code sets out key design ambitions for the site and then sets out strategies and requirements for several different themes to help meet these ambitions. The themes are:

- **The Strategic Framework** (including land use and stewardship)
- **Nature** (including green infrastructure and water management)
- **Movement** (including parking design, movement strategies)
- **Public space** (including street design, open space, play and recreation)
- **Built form** (including density, building typologies, building lines and heights)
- **Identity** (including wayfinding, sense of place and local character)
- **Resources** (including energy use, adaptability and future-proofing)

Site-wide strategies are accompanied by diagrams and written rules of mandatory requirements ('must's) and flexible requirements or recommendations ('should's). Illustrations and supporting text is used to show the intention of the requirements. The requirements reflect relevant policy, guidance, community views and site analysis.

By focussing on the strategic elements of the development the code leaves scope for innovation and variety in future proposals whilst fixing those elements that are necessary to achieve a high-quality place where people and nature can thrive.

Who will benefit from development at Latton Priory?

Development at Latton Priory will create a vibrant new neighbourhood on the edge of Harlow with a minimum of 1,050 new homes. It will provide quality new homes for local people as part of the Harlow & Gilston Garden Town. In addition, the new neighbourhood will include new schools, usable green spaces including pitches and a new park, play spaces, a local centre and retail and community facilities, which will also serve residents in the wider area. It's therefore important that everyone has a say in how the new neighbourhood is designed.

What we heard: Detailed feedback on the draft Strategic Design Code by chapter

This is an overview of all feedback is collated from all public engagement methods – in person events, online/paper survey, email responses and youth workshops. It does not include responses from Statutory consultees. Details of responses collected through each form of engagement can be found in the Appendices.

DESIGN AMBITIONS

In the survey, there was general agreement with the Design Ambitions, with the following considered most important:

- A lively core of schools, amenities and shops supports a thriving and resilient community
- An integral network of green routes and spaces connects surrounding landscape and enhances the Green Wedge into Harlow
- A variety of uplifting and safe streets and spaces encourage year-round active and healthy lifestyles for all ages
- Active and sustainable travel is the most appealing way to get around, including travel into Harlow and Epping
- The climate emergency is addressed with buildings and spaces that can withstand the changing climate and minimise impact on the environment
- There is flexibility to adapt to future needs, anticipating changes in travel, work and lifestyles

Less of a priority, but still agreed, were:

- Compact, human-scale built form nestles comfortably into the hillside overlooking Harlow
- The art and innovation of Harlow, the market town and pastoral character of Epping inform a distinctive identity

Additional comments called for:

- Quality design, materials, and construction
- Attractive architecture
- Integration with the surrounding area
- Questions were also asked about the benefits to Harlow itself.

COMMENTS:

'Please don't destroy this one time opportunity to build something good, don't try to cut costs on architecture or design'

'Whilst this addresses a new development, there is no framework for integration with existing infrastructures'

'It's all very well doing the design code but it's all about the site and not enough about the wider area, connections and interfaces'

'Referring back to the November 2022 Latton Priory SMP draft report consultation, one of the key policies of particular relevance to Latton Priory was noted to be: Policy SP3 Place Shaping - ensure positive integration with adjacent rural and urban communities. This KEY policy is still not met within the Latton Priory Draft Design Code, in terms of the impact that the proposals will have

upon the residents in the Rye Hill Road area, and those of many other Harlow roads that will be affected by Latton Priory.'

'The amount of work that has gone into this design code is exemplary and should guide all other developments in the EF district. Well done to all those involved.'

LAND USE

There are concerns about the impact on the view both from the neighbouring part of Harlow, and from Epping. These are linked to the position of the site on a ridge and existing planning stipulations surrounding this. The raised location was also thought to have the potential to be a windswept location; using trees as buffers was suggested.

In-person events highlighted a need to consider the impacts on the neighbouring area of Harlow, and to give further consideration to the site boundary.

There is concern about where the travellers' site is located within the development ie close to the neighbourhood centre. Many people expressed concerns that antisocial behaviour and crime associated with an existing site at Fernhill Road might be exacerbated. It was acknowledged that these issues were particular to this site and not to traveller communities in general. Consultation is taking place with Design Out Crime and other relevant services to help address this.

The need for social infrastructure – particularly schools and healthcare – was highlighted, as well as concerns about the impact on roads and additional population.

COMMENTS:

'The area proposed is too close to existing homes and Schools and the Roads and access routes just cannot take the extra chaos the build will bring. The proposed new homes will take away beautiful land that is used by 1000s of people for walks and to take their children.'

'The site should be moved northwards so it lies beneath the ridge as would fit with Sir Frederick Gibberd's design standards - not to dominate the skyline. The rooflines should be hidden from views from the south.'

'A protected barrier of trees and shrubs should also be in place, setting the new buildings away from these borders, again minimising any disturbance.'

'It is IMPOSSIBLE for up to an extra 3600 Harlow residents to positively integrate into Harlow's existing local healthcare provision, which is already stretched beyond capacity. A design code for Latton Priory with ZERO local healthcare facilities included in it is NOT APPROPRIATE'

STEWARDSHIP

Maintenance was a concern in workshop conversations and the survey, and of particular importance to young people.

This also aligns with the HGGT stewardship charter, which is undergoing separate consultation.

Due to the location of the site – adjacent to Harlow but within the district of Epping Forest – several people said that maintenance should be funded through EFDC council tax. There should be minimal (financial and managerial) onus on homeowners.

COMMENTS:

'Please provide adequate funding for training opportunities for staff involved in this essential aspect of the development.'

NATURE

Green space, fields, woodland and hedgerows are an important part of the local identity and culture. People therefore felt strongly about both conservation of / reducing the impact on existing wildlife and woodland, as well as incorporating greenery into new streets.

Climate resilience was acknowledged as a key consideration for a green space strategy – choosing climate resistant species, and using planting to provide shade and purify air.

There was a unanimously positive response to green streets, partly as attractive places, but also to boost biodiversity.

In conversations at events with Harlow residents, the idea of a green buffer between Harlow and the new development was also raised by residents who would be losing green space behind their homes and were concerned about having the new homes right behind their's.

More than half of survey respondents supported the following aspects of the Design Code:

- A greenway for walking, cycling and other non-car-based travel
- Green fingers of land penetrating the site
- A new park
- A wetland area
- Connecting with and extending Harlow's Green Wedge
- A new park
- Sustainable Drainage (SuDS)
- Allocation of a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)
- Supporting biodiversity and climate change

There was less interest from survey respondents and in-person discussions around:

- Allotments and food growing – although Youth Councillors identified these as facilities that would be well used by older people and Asian families.
- Sports pitches were identified as something of particular importance to young people; further details of the activities they would like provision for can be found under 'Play'.
- Concerns around existing natural habitat centred on
- Destruction of existing hedgerows and trees

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- Impact on existing wildlife habitats and routes
- Loss of existing countryside
- Safety around ponds / blue infrastructure
- Hayfever from certain plant species
- Smells from stagnant water in attenuation ponds

Specific questions included

- Whether the existing deer route from Latton Woods across the site had been taken into account
- Will the oak trees along Riddings Lane be preserved?

COMMENTS:

'I love Harlow because of the trees!'

'I think having modern houses next to the colourful green space looks good'

'We have an attenuation pond near us and it stinks!'

'Will the developers landscape the Harlow side, as the public generally have a distrust of developers and if not written into a design code as a mandatory action will probably not be a consideration due to costs.'

'Harlow's green wedge should not be imposed upon. There should be a clear and big enough wedge between the new site and Harlow.'

'There are currently huge problems with water run off from the green wedge at the north end of the LP site, across and down Rye hill Rd and into Longwood. Currently surface water runs into housing gas supplies causing major issues. All proposed land drainage for LP must have capacity to resolve these problems.'

'A greenway connecting to Epping to encourage active travel to underground network [would be good].'

'I wouldn't really use community gardens, but older people might and it would be good to have things for all ages.'

MOVEMENT

The impact on existing roads and traffic congestions was a major concern for residents in Harlow and Epping / Thornwood, as well as online respondents. Much of this is the remit of the Transport Strategy rather than the Strategic Design Code, and there was a strong call for the Transport Strategy to be shared before the Design Code is endorsed. Detailed comments received on this subject will be shared with the transport consultant team.

More information was requested on entrance and exit points to the Latton Priory site, particularly with reference to potential impacts on Rye Hill Road.

The example of Low Traffic Neighbourhood interventions in Bruce Grove, Haringey, North London were suggested by one respondent as a successful model for preventing rat-running.

Safety and security – The safety of roads, streets, walkways and cycleways is one of the chief concerns. It was regarded by survey respondents as one of the most important factors in encouraging people to walk and cycle, and it was one of the key topics in both Youth Council workshops. Safety means both road safety (eg separating cycle lanes from cars) but more importantly personal safety (eg mugging).

Good lighting was one of the most important things for making people feel safe; many also cited cctv, clear lines of sight and places with activity as deterrents to crime and antisocial behaviour.

Active travel – Bike security was seen as something that would promote cycling, with approval for communal street bike sheds and the request for secure bike parking near activities (eg play, sport) and neighbourhood centre.

Places to sit, good signposting and the attractiveness of routes also encourage people to walk/cycle. It was noted that equestrianism is also a popular activity in this area.

Bus provision would need to be reliable, frequent and supported even if not viable for a private operator. There are concerns a service would not continue. Real time information was seen as essential, rolled out across the network.

Parking – the issue of how to most effectively design parking drew mixed responses from the survey and in-person sessions, with some wanting to see on site /on street provision restricted to one space per house, and others insisting there should be no limit to car ownership with adequate parking off road.

Thornwood residents were concerned that restricted parking provision at Latton Priory might push it on to them; Harlow residents that people would park further into Harlow.

There was much interest in car barns. It was asked that security, surveillance, management, maintenance and disabled access be considered in their design and operation.

EV provision was met with approval, although one respondent thought it would be outmoded within 10-15 years and replaced with hydrogen technology.

People liked the idea of car-free play streets, but commented on some of the detail and wanted assurances of emergency vehicle access.

COMMENTS:

Not everyone can cycle, please look at opportunities for wheelchair users or electric buggies

More than one parking space per household for parking minimum of 2 vehicles off road

Buses need to be good for people to use them. Need to build people's trust and build in a culture of reliable and convenient public transport. This includes real-time information and buses that run at all times, including to serve those on night-shifts. Plus is there anything to prevent bus operator from closing the route if they don't think it makes them enough money?

*Plan cycle paths where cyclists / pedestrians will not feel vulnerable in remote areas
Please ensure that there is real security and round the clock monitoring of car barns - all too often
tools etc are stolen from parked up vehicles.*

PUBLIC SPACE

Essential things for public space were:

- Good lighting – considered hugely important in order to make streets and public spaces feel safe.
- Accessibility of streets for all
- Bins (including dog poo) and recycling
- Maintenance – in general, people want their streets and public spaces to look attractive and cared for. Young people said bins next to seating would help reduce litter.
- Plants and greenery
- Trees and shade
- Places to sit – to rest, socialise, keep an eye on children playing
- Accessible public toilets (although opinion was divided in survey, it was thought v important by young people)
- Spaces to play close to home (more than half of survey, and youth council)
- Digital connectivity (more than half of survey, and young people]

Much discussion of public space was had in workshops with Harlow and Epping Forest Youth Councils. Young people want places to look (and feel) attractive. They like colour, street art, greenery, flowers, things that appeal to all the senses. Maintenance is important (especially planted areas and playgrounds), and the provision of bins to discourage littering. They also wanted to ensure that Latton Priory offered something to people of all ages.

Local centre

Workshops with Youth Councillors examined in detail what a neighbourhood centre could be like. Their collective vision was of an active, safe, accessible, welcoming place that reflected the diversity of Harlow. Somewhere people could come together, meet friends, sit and chat, but where you can have fun without having to spend money.

They saw it as somewhere with independent shops/businesses and a market (creating character and local opportunity); car-free but with a drop off area; providing the infrastructure to host events and music; using public art to reflect different communities.

Practical considerations included : drinking fountains, waste & recycling bins, seating (sheltered), lighting, PowerPoints for markets and performances.

COMMENTS:

*Pavements need to be wide enough for people to walk and for pushchairs / wheelchairs
I like the idea of residents sitting outside their house and getting to know their neighbours*

*Art pieces in the neighbourhood centre could reflect different types of communities, which gives
the chance of them being involved in their creation – if they want to be*

Good lighting is insanely important!

The neighbourhood centre should not be boring; [it should have] lots of things to do, with lots of people, the hub of the community

PLAY

Popular recreational activities mentioned (by Youth Councillors and survey respondents) were:

- Bike pump track
- Equestrian
- Walking
- Places to sit and chat
- Cycling routes
- Sports centre/ pitches
- Local shops
- Food/drink venues
- Music venue
- A natural running track
- Swings
- Tennis
- Basketball
- Netball
- Badminton
- Football

Key considerations:

- Maintenance
- Safety (Street boulders for climbing on were thought dangerous rather than adventurous by Youth Councillors)

Youth Councillors stressed that not all activities should be outdoors, or sport-based, and that indoor provision should be made for music, indoor sports, and cultural activities. They also said that seating would be needed for parents near play.

COMMENT:

The car-free play street is the best thing about it – it creates a space for people to hang out and spend time in.

Games for kids in the street would be good

BUILT FORM

Variety of built form is seen as a positive aspect of local identity and of Harlow. ‘slabs’ of building blocks are particularly disliked.

Low rise is seen as most appropriate, in keeping with neighbouring housing.

Homes should have generous proportions.

Survey responses all considered the following aspects of the code important:

- Minimising energy use
- Variety
- Robust edges and enclosure to streets and spaces
- Built form that maximises overlook and minimises blank frontage to the street

COMMENTS:

‘I don’t like the development at New Hall; it looks cheap and nasty and I can’t see it maturing into anything nice’

‘I don’t mind density, but I don’t want it right by us’

You can imagine that, if your property has been overlooking green fields and hedgerows then the prospect of having the possibility of a three-story building is a depressing outcome. What will the developers do to ensure that the views from Harlow are as pleasant as those offered to the new development?

IDENTITY

Nature and green space is seen as a fundamental aspect of local character; woodland, hedgerows and a farming typology are particularly pertinent on the Latton Priory site.

Attractiveness and quality of architecture, materials and construction are all important factors in whether people like a place.

The youth councillors see diversity and multiculturalism as an important part of Harlow’s identity and said they wanted to see that represented in the public spaces.

Comments from workshops:

‘I don’t like the pale brick [of the new Cambridge vernacular]; it’s not very Essex. I do like black boarding though, that does feel very Essex.’

‘Art pieces in the neighbourhood centre could reflect different types of communities, with the chance of them being involved in their creation if they want to be’

RESOURCES

The need to design with climate change, reduced energy / carbon use, and responsible management of resources is recognised as important.

In the survey responses, there was agreement with all of the measures, with those directly relating to biodiversity and green / blue infrastructure given the highest importance, suggesting that nature and the natural landscape is of particular importance in the Harlow / Epping Forest area.

At the public events, there was support for green roofs, solar panels, EV charging,

Futureproofing of new development was also seen as important to survey respondents, with the inclusion of digital technologies considered very important.

Many people expressed concerns about the impact of extensive new development on water management, flooding and sewage treatment, and more detail was requested on what would happen to water from Latton Bush after it had passed through permeable paving / SuDS.

COMMENTS:

Homes need to be well insulated from the start, with heat pumps etc. It is much easier than trying to retrofit a decade later

There's an opportunity to build eco homes that address climate-change measures. We need to force builders to incorporate them. Things like solar panels, grey water usage, etc

USING THE DOCUMENT

TNote that the useability of the design code is being tested separately on potential end uses – including architects and planning officers. These will be reported on separately.

Comments from survey respondents and event attendees were that:

- it's too wordy
- it has too many abbreviations
- the maps should be clearer
- keys are needed

OTHER ISSUES

Most of the issues raised at in-person sessions, and several submitted by email and via the survey, were concerned with matters beyond the remit of the Strategic Design Code.

Infrastructure delivery, including healthcare and traffic

Latton Priory Draft Strategic Design Code – Engagement Report

Many people – in person and online – raised concerns about the pressures of new development at Latton Priory on local infrastructure, and the timings of its delivery. These included:

- Pressure on social infrastructure – specifically schools and healthcare – which is perceived as already overstretched. There was a positive response to the inclusion of a reference to healthcare in the latest draft of the design code.
- Joined-up thinking eg that the healthcare strategy for locations of new provision ties in with the sustainable transport strategy
- Need to provide new infrastructure at the same time as (not after) homes – especially schools and healthcare, but also other community facilities – to serve people when they move in
- Worsening of traffic congestion and road safety. Rye Hill Road, B1393, and routes to Epping and the M11. More details can be read in email responses and event feedback.
- Additional commuters using Epping Tube station, and busses/roads to reach it
- Who would operate the bus routes, whether they would remain viable and in operations, reliability and frequency, and the need for area-wide real-time information
- Pressure on sewage and reservoirs

It was explained in public sessions that some of these concerns would be dealt with through the separate transport strategy and Infrastructure Development Plan; it is recommended that these are shared with those who signed up for email updates when available.

Development delivery

At the in-person events, more information was requested about the timescales of delivery and which parts of the site would be developed first.

Harlow residents in particular would like to be informed of any planning applications coming forward and the channels through which they can comment.

Both Epping / Thornwood and Harlow residents expressed concern about local disruption during the construction period.

Boundary

Residents living adjacent to the Latton Priory site said they did not want their view out over fields spoiled by the new homes. They requested that more consideration be given to the boundary treatment – for example the use of a green buffer between the new homes and existing, and placing lower-rise buildings on the edge of the site nearest to existing homes.

Anti-development sentiment

The situation of the development – on the edge of Harlow – has provoked much opposition to any development happening on the site. This is not something that is within the purview of the Strategic Design code, but is noted here as it was a core sentiment raised by Harlow residents who attended the in person sessions at the Latton Bush centre, and by a small number of Harlow residents lodging official responses by email or online. (It should be noted, that this was not the case at the in-person sessions in Thornwood.)

Politics

Many Harlow residents see this development as EFDC pushing their housing needs onto Harlow. As the site sits within the district of Epping Forest, but adjoined to Harlow, questions were raised over

- Local council and parliamentary representation (which ward or constituency would cover it)
- Where council tax would go and which council would be responsible for providing services
- If EFDC are the planning authority, how much representation Harlow and its residents have when planning applications come forward

Appendices

Events details

Event	Date	Venue	Attendees
Event 1: Epping Forest Youth Council Workshop	Tuesday 24 October 3-4pm	Epping Forest District Council Civic Offices 323 High Street Epping CM16 4BZ	7
Event 2: General public drop-in exhibition and discussion	Sat 28 Oct 10-12am	Thornwood Village Hall, North Weald Bassett, Thornwood, Epping CM16 6NB	20
Event 3: General public drop in exhibition, discussion, presentation and Q&A	Sat 28 Oct 2-4pm	Griffin Suite, Latton Bush Centre, Southern Way, Harlow CM18 7BL	21
Event 4: Public exhibition, presentation and discussion	Weds 1 Nov 7.30-9pm	Griffin Suite, Latton Bush Centre, Southern Way, Harlow CM18 7BL	12 (some repeated from previous session)
Workshop 5: Public exhibition, presentation and discussion	Thurs 2 Nov 6.30-8pm	Thornwood Village Hall, North Weald Bassett, Thornwood, Epping CM16 6NB	13

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Event 6: Harlow Youth Council workshop	Monday 20 November 6.30-8.30pm	Latton Bush Centre, Southern Way, Harlow CM18 7BL	12
Meeting with HGGT board	5 December	Discover Harlow engagement hub, Harvey Centre, Harlow	Approx 20
Members' briefing	January 2024		tbc

An additional event for older residents scheduled for 1 Nov at Leonard Davis House was planned but cancelled by residents due to a timetable clash. Residents were invited to attend the other public sessions instead.